

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2011 - Blue Ribbon Schools Program**  
**A Public School**

School Type (Public Schools): ☒ Charter ☐ Title 1 ☐ Magnet ☐ Choice  
(Check all that apply, if any)

Name of Principal: Mr. James Waller

Official School Name: Gertz-Ressler Academy High School

School Mailing Address: 2023 South Union Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90007-1326

County: Los Angeles State School Code Number: 19647330106864

Telephone: (213) 745-8141 E-mail: jwaller@laalliance.org

Fax: (213) 745-8142 Web URL: gertzresslerhigh.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Superintendent\*: Dr. Judy Burton Superintendent e-mail: jbarton@laalliance.org

District Name: Los Angeles Unified District Phone: (213) 943-4930

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mr. Tony Ressler

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Blue Ribbon Schools Project Manager (aba.kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

## PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2010-2011 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2005.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 or 2010.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
9. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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All data are the most recent year available.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district: 0 Elementary schools  
(per district designation) 6 Middle/Junior high schools  
12 High schools  
0 K-12 schools  
18 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure: 9981

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located: Urban or large central city
4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
5. Number of students as of October 1, 2010 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total			# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0		6	0	0	0
K	0	0	0		7	0	0	0
1	0	0	0		8	0	0	0
2	0	0	0		9	82	70	152
3	0	0	0		10	67	61	128
4	0	0	0		11	49	82	131
5	0	0	0		12	34	67	101
Total in Applying School:								512

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native  
1 % Asian  
8 % Black or African American  
91 % Hispanic or Latino  
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
0 % White  
0 % Two or more races  
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2009-2010 school year: 7%

This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

(1)	Number of students who transferred <b>to</b> the school after October 1, 2009 until the end of the school year.	17
(2)	Number of students who transferred <b>from</b> the school after October 1, 2009 until the end of the school year.	20
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	37
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2009	514
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.07
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	7

8. Percent limited English proficient students in the school: 18%

Total number of limited English proficient students in the school: 92

Number of languages represented, not including English: 2

Specify languages:

Korean and Spanish

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 89%  
 Total number of students who qualify: 456

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 7%  
 Total number of students served: 36

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>1</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>34</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	<u><b>Full-Time</b></u>	<u><b>Part-Time</b></u>
Administrator(s)	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>25</u>	<u>0</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff	<u>7</u>	<u>0</u>
Total number	<u>39</u>	<u>0</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1: 20:1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only high schools need to supply graduation rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any student or teacher attendance rates under 95% and teacher turnover rates over 12% and fluctuations in graduation rates.

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Daily student attendance	96%	95%	96%	98%	98%
Daily teacher attendance	96%	97%	98%	98%	97%
Teacher turnover rate	23%	38%	36%	38%	52%
High school graduation rate	99%	90%	92%	%	%

If these data are not available, explain and provide reasonable estimates.

Notes: GRHS celebrated its first graduation ceremony with the Class of 2008. All graduating classes have above a 90% graduation rate. High rates are attributed to the small, personalized community students experience on a daily basis. High student and teacher average daily attendance imply a collaborative learning community where everyone plays an integral part towards student achievement. Although the teacher turnover rate is over 12%, this is attributed to size of the school. In 2005-2006, there were 14 teachers for two grade levels and 24 teachers since then. Teacher turnover rates are attributed to Teach for America teachers completing their two year commitment, promotion into administration, transferring to another Alliance school, or contract non-renewals. GRHS teachers are on annual contracts to ensure that every teacher is an effective teacher educating our youth.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools): Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2010 are doing as of Fall 2010.

Graduating class size:	<u>97</u>
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	<u>61%</u>
Enrolled in a community college	<u>38%</u>
Enrolled in vocational training	<u>0%</u>
Found employment	<u>0%</u>
Military service	<u>1%</u>
Other	<u>0%</u>
<b>Total</b>	<u><b>100%</b></u>

Gertz-Ressler High School, the flagship campus for the Alliance for College Ready Public Schools, embodies the tradition of academic excellence by providing students from traditionally underserved areas with the opportunity to be prepared to enter and succeed at a four-year university. As a charter high school, we are able to offer a personalized learning environment where partnerships are formed between families and the school community in order to support the academic and social-emotional development of our students. With a student body of 512, we are able to group our students in advisory families where relationships between teachers and students are developed and sustained over time. The advisory structure also allows students to have a voice in the aspects of the school that directly affect them.

At Gertz-Ressler High School, our teaching staff is committed to providing our students with access to rigorous, standards-based instruction that will prepare them to compete against other students on a global level. A visit to any of our classes will show students engaged in meaningful assignments and learning tasks that are based on the California State learning standards. Our staff is dedicated to working with families and with the community to help guide our students down the path to success.

Our teachers maintain high expectations for all of our students while working to foster the critical thinking skills that are essential for success in college. Our continued commitment to providing high quality standards-based instruction is also evident by our test scores. We are proud of our 853 Academic Performance Index, ranking us as the ninth highest scoring high school in the Los Angeles Unified School District. We also have the honor of being a California Distinguished School and a two-time EPIC Award Silver Medal winner.

Gertz-Ressler is nestled in the Pico-Union neighborhood of Los Angeles, which lies just south of downtown. Pico-Union is a haven for Mexican and Central American immigrant families seeking better opportunities for their children. Amidst the hard working families in the Pico-Union district there is an undercurrent of gang activity that undermines the values that many of the families in our community work to instill in their children. The Pico Union district is the birthplace of two of the most notorious street gangs in Los Angeles, the 18<sup>th</sup> Street gang and Mara Salvatrucha or M-13 as they are commonly referred. Despite the social issues that plague the Pico-Union district, Gertz-Ressler High School has created an environment where students from the community can escape the pressures of gang violence and drug activity.

For eleven hours a day, students can focus on learning and developing into well-rounded and conscious citizens. Facing History and Ourselves is one of the many academic programs that we offer at Gertz-Ressler to foster social awareness and consciousness in our students. The Facing History curriculum utilizes case studies on historical events like the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, and the Civil Rights Movement as a lens to help students understand and confront some of the issues that plague our own community. As a culminating project with our freshmen class, one teacher has developed a task where students identify positive aspects of their communities through the use of photography. Through various photographs, students evaluate portions of their community that need improvement. Students also highlight the significance of being an upstander in society rather than a bystander. They make a personal action plan that allows them the opportunity to become upstanders. Students use self-reflections, double-entry journaling, and historical references throughout the course of the project to identify patterns in history with upstanders and their personal role in the community. Participation in the Facing History project has led many of our students to become committed to raising awareness about the issues that impact our community.

In addition to proving our students with learning opportunities that promote their academic and social development, we also work to help them cultivate interests in extracurricular activities. Through our

intramural athletics program we offer a boys' and girls' soccer team, boys' and girls' basketball, cross-country, girls' volleyball and swimming.

Our partnership with Afterschool All-Stars has allowed us to provide a variety of extracurricular activities for our students to explore beyond the regular school day. Dance, photography, poetry, music, hiking and Mandarin are some of the clubs that we are able to offer to our students. This creates a culture of learning that extends well beyond the school day. Afterschool All-Stars also supports us in working with our students to understand the importance and value in giving back to our community through the Youth and Power club (YAP). Through YAP, our students hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Charity Auction. Photographs and artwork created by the students of Gertz-Ressler were auctioned to raise money for cancer research at St. Jude. To date our students have raised over \$800 for various charities through the Charity Auction.

Our continued commitment to providing students in underserved areas with access to an education that will prepare them to succeed and supports their individual growth and development makes us worthy of the Blue Ribbon Honor.



### 1. Assessment Results:

Students in grade 10 are administered the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) to demonstrate proficiency in English/Language Arts (ELA), math, and writing. Students need to pass this exam to be eligible for graduation from any public high school in California. Students can demonstrate content knowledge in one of five proficiency bands: advanced, proficient, basic, below basic, or far below basic. Students scoring advanced or proficient would have “met the standard” for the year. On average, 100% of students participate in testing administration each year. This year we again had 100% of our 10th grade participate in the CAHSEE. Passing scores are 350 points or above for both the ELA and the mathematics portions of the exam. This year 126 out of the 138 students tested earned a passing score on both sections of the CAHSEE on their first try. Students who do not pass on the first try will have three other opportunities over the next two years to pass the exam before they are scheduled to graduate.

At GRHS, student achievement in ELA as demonstrated on the CAHSEE steadily increased over the past five years. In ELA, 70% of students were proficient or advanced in 2010, which was an increase of 14% five years ago. Hispanic, African American, and socio-economically disadvantaged subgroups also demonstrated the same positive projective within five years with 13%, 14%, and 14% growth, respectively, proficiency was at least 60% in each of these subgroups. A significant gain can be seen with our students across the board as they doubled the number scoring proficient and advanced over a four-year span.

In math, proficiency percentages have almost doubled within the last five years both school-wide and with most subgroups. School-wide and Hispanic, African American, and socio-economically disadvantaged subgroups had over 70% proficient and advanced with our English Learner population having increased 13% over the 2006 scores. In 2006, all of our sub-groups were in the single digits for students scoring in the proficient and advanced range. The most dramatic improvement has been with our African American student performance which has risen from 8% in 2006 to 86% this past year.

Closing the achievement gap continues to be a priority for GRHS. Approximately 19% of students are considered English Learners (ELs) for the CAHSEE exam since they were classified as English Learners or were Re-designated Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) but did not meet CST proficiency requirements for three years. ELs were between 24-34% below the school-wide proficiency rates in both content areas on CAHSEE 2010. While proficiency numbers have remained steadily over five years, the growth was actually -2% in ELA and 10% in math. School-wide strategic intervention for classified ELs increased to encompass RFEPs. Teachers became more aware of their ELs and RFEPs with special designation in PowerSchool, our student information system, and through weekly professional development workshops. Professional development workshops covering Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) instructional strategies were shared to all teachers. Administrators monitored SDAIE usage during classroom observations and supported teachers with continual refinement and breadth of strategies throughout the year.

The Special Education population has also increased over the last three years from 9 to 24 students to reflect 6% of its population during the 2009-2010 school year. To help close the gap, GRHS hired a full-time resource teacher to work closely with content area teachers instead of contracting with a Special Education teacher agency. The instructional model also changed from a pull-out program to an inclusion model where students remained in the classroom with the resource teacher providing direct support. All special education students to date have passed the CAHSEE on their own without having to appeal for the waiver that they are eligible for through their Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs).

## **2. Using Assessment Results:**

Data is used to inform our instructional decisions at Gertz-Ressler High School. During our professional development at the beginning of each school year, we analyze our California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) data to determine our instructional focus for the school year. We notice trends and work to determine causes. Upon careful analysis of our current year data, we decided to focus on embedding S.D.A.I.E. strategies across all content areas because our data indicated that there is a small gap between the achievement of our English language learners and our other sub-groups.

Our benchmark assessments have been beneficial in informing our instructional decisions as well. Our benchmark assessments are aligned to the California Standards Test as well as the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), so they provide an indication of how are students are progressing towards the learning standards that will be assessed at the end of the school year. Benchmark assessments are administered quarterly. After each assessment, teachers analyze their data to determine which standards need to be re-taught.

Our teachers at Gertz-Ressler High School are strategic about how they use assessment data to inform their instructional decisions. Teachers develop individualized plans for students who have not met the desired benchmark. These individualized plans include strategies to differentiate instruction along with after-school tutoring through our Gertz-Succeeds program. Teachers use benchmark assessments to assess how students are progressing toward their goals. These individualized plans are modified as needed.

We also use student performance data to determine the types of interventions and supports that students may need. These students are required to attend Gertz-Succeeds, our teacher-led tutoring program, to provide them with targeted and strategic support in their area of need. We monitor their progress frequently, and when these students show gains in their areas of challenge, we modify the supports that they receive.

Through ongoing data analysis we are able to determine student needs and work to build the capacity of the staff to meet them. Our strategic use of assessment results continues to drive our academic success.

## **3. Communicating Assessment Results:**

As a public charter high school, it is important that we are open and transparent about our assessment results. We also recognize that parents are our strongest allies in ensuring that students are successful. We are diligent in ensuring that parents are kept informed of their child's progress. Parents receive the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) results in the mail. We host a Saturday Academy where parents are invited to learn how to read and understand the assessment results. We explain the performance bands and their meaning. We also provide the parents with tips on things that can be done at home to increase their child's performance level.

Another way that we work to keep parents informed of their child's performance is by providing a progress report every five weeks. We have parent conferences after each progress report where students and parents can come together with teachers to discuss student progress and work together to target areas that students should focus on. Teachers also share current student work during parent conferences so that parents are informed of the type of work that students are producing. We also use the Teleparent system, which sends out an automated phone message informing parents of missed homework assignments and other concerns.

It is crucial that students have a clear understanding of their performance levels. Teachers work with students to ensure that students understand their CAHSEE results. In addition to attending the Saturday Academy with their parents to become more informed about their state assessment results, teachers also guide students through understanding their score reports during the advisory period. Teachers also work with students on setting personal goals based on their assessment data.

The infrastructures that we have in place to ensure that parents and students understand the assessment data supports the joint effort between families and the Gertz-Ressler community to work collaboratively to ensure that all students are working toward their maximum level of achievement.

In addition to keeping families informed and involved, we also use our school website to communicate student performance to the community. On our website we post our school accountability report card which contains our Academic Performance Index and our Adequate Yearly Progress. Our school accountability report card also contains information on graduation rates and how our sub-groups are progressing toward the established benchmark.

#### **4. Sharing Lessons Learned:**

As a professional learning community, we at Gertz-Ressler believe in the power of collaboration and the sharing of effective practices that support us in making and sustaining our significant achievement gains. One way in which we are able to share some of our best practices is through the New Leaders for New Schools EPIC award. The Effective Practice Incentive Community or EPIC, seeks out schools that have made significant gains and offers incentives to those schools for sharing their practices so that other educators may learn from their successes. A comprehensive case study is developed outlining the practices that the school site wishes to highlight and if selected, the case study is featured on the EPIC online platform known as EPIC Knowledge System. Gertz-Ressler is a two-time recipient of the EPIC award. The case study around our “Gertz-Reads” program was recently selected to be featured on the EPIC website.

Gertz-Reads is a school-wide reading program where all students and staff are engaged in reading selected texts that are relevant to students’ cultures and circumstances. During the advisory period, students and staff across the campus read the same text and engage in discussion of prompts that promote critical reading. Through Gertz-Reads we are able to provide extended time for reading instruction. We are also able to model the importance of reading for our students by having all staff including the administrative team, participate in the reading and discussion of the selected text.

In an effort to support other schools in developing a high school culture where reading is valued, we have documented our development and implementation of the Gertz-Reads program on the EPIC online platform at <http://epic.nlens.org/practiceProfiles/profile/default.aspx?id=139>. On the website, schools can get an overview of the steps that we took to implement the program. We discuss our plans to continue to build upon this effective practice. Artifacts that schools might find useful such as a reading list, discussion prompts, and lesson plans are shared on the EPIC website.

## 1. Curriculum:

The academic program at Gertz-Ressler high school is designed to ensure that all students are adequately prepared to enter and succeed at a four-year university. When a student earns a diploma from Gertz-Ressler High School, they will have met the course requirements necessary to qualify for entrance into the University of California system. We offer courses in the core areas of History/Social Science, English, Mathematics, Foreign Language and Science. We also offer physical education and Art.

### History/Social Science

In tenth grade, students take World History where they focus on major events that shaped the modern world from the 18<sup>th</sup> century through the present. They trace the rise of democratic ideas and develop an understanding of the historical roots of current world issues. In eleventh grade, students move on to US History. The course traces the development of the United States from the Spanish American War to the present. Students analyze the significant factors that are responsible for the emergence of the United States as a major world leader. In twelfth grade, students take American Government where they develop a critical perspective of the government and politics of the United States. This year, we are pleased that our entire senior class is taking AP US Government.

### English

Ninth and tenth grade English are survey courses where students explore the literary genres of poetry, drama, short stories and novels. There is also a focus on nonfiction text. Students work to develop their critical reading and writing skills. In eleventh grade, students take American Literature where they explore the growth and development of the nation through analyzing literary works from the colonial era to the present times. Students continue to develop their critical reading skills and they begin to experiment with a variety of writing styles. In twelfth grade, students take English Literature where they focus on England's literary, cultural and intellectual heritage. Students continue to write in a variety of forms in preparation for college level writing.

### Mathematics

Algebra I is the first level of math that we offer. The emphasis for the course is on solving and graphing linear functions, solving and graphing systems of linear equations, as well as solving and graphing quadratic functions. Students advance to geometry where the emphasis is on geometric proofs, the Pythagorean Theorem, symmetric proofs, and coordinated geometry. Algebra II complements and expands the mathematical content and concepts of Algebra I and Geometry with an emphasis on logarithmic and exponential equations, the binomial theorem and the complex number system. Advanced Mathematics is offered to students who have passed pre-calculus. We also have a pre-calculus class that is based on the standards for Trigonometry and Math Analysis. The course combines trigonometric, geometric and algebraic techniques to strengthen mathematical reasoning when problem solving. This school year, we were able to offer both calculus and AP Calculus.

### Science

In ninth grade, students take a survey course, Inter-coordinated Science, which introduces them to chemistry, biology and physics. Students take Biology in tenth grade. The topics for the course include evolution, DNA, photosynthesis, energy and reproduction. Students develop scientific thinking and an understanding of the role that biology plays in our daily lives. Chemistry is offered for juniors. The course is designed to provide an introduction to chemistry. There is an emphasis on critical thinking skills

relating to critical areas of study including compounds, chemical bonding, atoms, atomic structure and periodicity. Physics is our senior science class, which is designed to prepare students for college-level life science, engineering and physics courses.

Teachers at Gertz-Ressler employ a variety of instructional strategies to engage students with the content. Literacy development is a major focus and all content area teachers support literacy development through their instruction. Our teachers use a constructivist approach where they facilitate learning by honoring the knowledge that students bring to the classroom and using the inquiry process to support students in constructing new meaning and understanding. Expectations are set high and made clear for students while scaffolds are put in place for students requiring additional support. Teachers also provide students with opportunities to engage in discussions to deepen their understanding of the content. Unit projects and working in collaborative groups are other ways that students are given opportunities to engage with the content.

In addition to the core content areas, Gertz-Ressler also offers art to students in grade eleven. The art course is designed to introduce students to the spectrum of artistic endeavors, to enhance their creative ability and to familiarize them with various techniques, styles and mediums. Our physical education class is offered in grade nine where students are expected to achieve a level of physical fitness for health and performance while demonstrating knowledge of fitness concepts. Spanish is offered as a foreign language. Spanish for native speakers is a course that we offer to differentiate instruction for students who speak Spanish at home. We expect all of our students to study Spanish for at least three of the four years that they are at Gertz-Ressler. We offer both AP Spanish Language and AP Spanish Literature for those students who choose to study beyond the three-year requirement. We offer a variety of honors and Advanced Placement classes in all of our core content areas.

## **2. Reading/English:**

With a strong emphasis on preparing students to engage in college level reading and writing, students in ninth and tenth grade English read a variety of literary works across all genres. Students study the works of William Shakespeare, John Steinbeck, and Alice Walker to deepen their understanding through analysis and synthesis. In the eleventh grade, students can opt to take either 11<sup>th</sup> Grade English or AP English Language. In the 11<sup>th</sup> grade English course, students focus on the great literary works rooted in the American tradition of literature. Students engage with Native American text as well as text by authors such as Arthur Miller and Anne Bradstreet. In order to participate in AP English Language, students must demonstrate their commitment to the course by submitting an application for the course, which includes both a reading and writing component. In the twelfth grade, students have the option of taking 12<sup>th</sup> Grade English, or AP English Literature. In these courses, students explore the English literary tradition by examining the works of Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, and H.G. Wells in preparation for the texts that they will encounter at the university.

English teachers meet by department every two weeks during their shared conference period. Teachers use this time to discuss skills and standards that recur at each grade level, and to work collaboratively to develop strategies to help students meet these standards at each grade level. One strategy that the teachers have been working on is the development and use of common rubrics. Each teacher designed a rubric for a particular writing genre, which can be tailored for use at each grade level.

One of the goals of the English department is to improve our students' passage of college entrance writing exams. This spring, all students will write to the same college entrance essay prompt so that teachers can compare student results and identify specific areas of weakness at each level and develop lessons and strategies to improve student writing.

English teachers at Gertz-Ressler High School use reading material that is at grade-level or higher, while using reading strategies to make the material accessible for all readers. In the ninth grade, a new text is introduced by outlining the reading, front-loading vocabulary and other pre-reading activities. During reading, text is often read aloud, and questions are given during and after reading that address all levels of

Bloom's taxonomy. The tenth grade teacher uses cooperative learning by organizing students into reading teams. Students are grouped with others who are at similar reading levels, allowing the teacher to work with students in different groups and to differentiate reading instruction. In the eleventh grade, a combination of original, adapted and English Learner versions texts are used to make content more accessible. Efforts are also made to use audio/visual representation of the text. Twelfth grade students use Costa's levels of questioning, Socratic Seminars, and close reading strategies to access collegiate level texts.

### **3. Mathematics:**

Every student at Gertz-Ressler is expected to take four years of mathematics from the following sequence of courses: Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geometry, Pre-calculus, Calculus, AP Calculus AB. Additionally, every ninth grader is enrolled in a Math Support class.

Emphasis on building a solid foundation of Algebra skills and the adoption of a culture of high expectations and self-reflection are the main goals of the Algebra 1 course. Development of critical thinking and the ability to reason logically is the goal of the Geometry course. Students in Algebra 2 are expected to proficiently analyze and manipulate a variety of algebraic functions. Complex numbers, logarithms and series are introduced in Algebra 2 along with some basic probability and statistics principles. The baseline goal for every student at Gertz-Ressler is to complete at least the Algebra 2 course with a solid foundation of Algebra and Geometry skills, pass the math portion of the CAHSEE, and to score competitively on any college math placement exam.

Pre-calculus is a course that provides a deeper analysis of some of the functions learned in the previous Algebra class, along with a detailed analysis of the trigonometry and inverse trigonometric functions. Students are expected to perform complex computations accurately and efficiently, use the mathematical language of sets and intervals and functions to communicate about mathematics, and develop strong critical and analytical thinking.

Calculus is an introduction to the concepts of differentiation and integration in preparation for a college level Calculus course. AP Calculus is equivalent to the first course of college level Calculus. The AP Calculus course adheres to the requirements outlined by the College Board. Every AP Calculus student will take either the AP Calculus AB or the AP Calculus BC exam.

There are numerous supports in place for struggling students. During instructional time, teachers use a variety of strategies such as providing visual representations and using activities during their lessons to illustrate a concept to differentiate lesson presentation. We also use centers, and Kuta software generated questions of various difficulty levels to differentiate the practice activities. Students lacking a strong foundation in Pre-algebra and Algebra material are enrolled in the Revolution Prep Algebra Readiness and Algebra I courses. The Math Support course uses Revolution Prep along with other material to strengthen the math skills of ninth graders. Any students needing extra support are enrolled in additional sessions of Revolution Prep after school and/or on Saturdays. Each math teacher offers tutoring outside of regular school hours at least once per week to help students who are struggling with the subject or students who want to enhance their understanding.

### **4. Additional Curriculum Area:**

Our school's mission is to prepare students to be successful and competitive in college. According to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) done in 2007, the United States stands at 11<sup>th</sup> place for 8<sup>th</sup> graders taking the science benchmark. Our science department has scientifically concluded that this just isn't good enough and as President Obama stated, "This is our generation's Sputnik moment".

At our school, our science department is working towards developing skills that can be built upon from year to year. The three skills that we are focusing on are textbook literacy, analysis of charts/diagrams

and problem-solving skills through laboratory practice. To promote a culture of literacy, we begin in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade with effective textbook reading skills; students learn the SQ3R strategy which teaches them to identify important questions in their reading and format their notes into a study guide. In the tenth grade, we build on this skill by introducing students to scientific journals and we build on SQ3R by analyzing the validity of the journal, which teaches our students to form evidence based conclusions. By the eleventh and twelfth grade students are able to read scientific literature and extract important information from primary sources.

Literacy is an essential college-ready skill; we are working towards making information accessible to all our students. We have students enter our classrooms with a variety of reading and comprehension levels and we address this issue by modeling reading and note-taking skills. By doing this consistently across grade levels and across-curriculum, reading becomes an expectation for all of our students.

This year we are moving towards changing the scope and sequence of the department by pushing our students towards AP Biology in the tenth grade. Students that are prepared after 9<sup>th</sup> grade biology will have the option to take AP Biology as sophomores. By successfully completing an AP course in the tenth grade, students will not only earn college credits but they will build their confidence in their skills. This can encourage them to take more AP classes, making them more competitive and ready for success in college.

In the science department we promote college-readiness by maintaining high expectations for every student. We work together to increase their critical thinking skills and promote literacy as a source of acquiring essential information. It is not enough for our students to enroll in college, we expect them to excel.

## **5. Instructional Methods:**

At Gertz-Ressler High School, students with learning disabilities and 504 Plans are fully included in the general education classroom. Our teachers accommodate at the instructional level by providing our students with guided notes, preferential seating in the classroom and additional time on exams to meet their individual learning needs. Our teachers provide both visual and auditory aids in the classroom, and tangible lessons such as spheres in math classes. In addition, the RSP program has been able to efficiently co-teach and co-plan Math, English, Science, and History lessons directly with the teachers to ensure that differentiation is embedded into the classroom structure, curriculum and environment.

Our school provides our students with access to technology in the classroom, allowing visual and auditory learning through multiple modalities in the classroom. The students in the resource program are also programmed into a resource lab class where the ratio of 2 teachers to 16 students maximum to provide a more individualized learning environment. In this class, we are able to expose our students to the curriculum prior to the teachers' lessons, which allows our students to view the material a second time while included in the general education classroom. In addition, we re-teach and review material that some students may have struggled with to ensure their mastery of the standards being taught in the general education classroom. Many teachers provide small group before and after school for struggling students.

Our teachers utilize scaffolded learning in the classroom, by providing options for each student in regards to the level they feel most comfortable with for a lesson. In math classes, each teacher has three types of independent practice activities, planned based on their student needs. Teachers design one assignment for students who need more practice with the material and a different assignment is prepared for students who feel comfortable with the material. In addition, teachers have assignments developed for students who may want an additional challenge with the content. In the English classes, teachers use adaptive versions of texts to help struggling readers.

These are just a sample of the differentiated instruction strategies that our teachers utilize in the classroom on a daily basis. In an effort to differentiate our instruction for our English Language Learners and our

Standard English Language Learners, SDAIE strategies are embedded in the lessons across all content areas with an emphasis on academic language development.

## **6. Professional Development:**

Professional development is used to provide a continued focus on teaching and learning and supporting teachers in providing students access to content that is rigorous and standards-based.

For two hours each week, Gertz-Ressler teachers are involved in professional development at the school site. The time is divided between teams and whole staff professional learning activities. During professional development there is time designated for teachers meet in interdisciplinary teams to problem solve issues pertaining to specific students. This is time allotted for interdisciplinary teams to discuss issues and concerns that are pertinent to the team. Data analysis is an ongoing topic during professional development. An ample amount of professional development time is spent analyzing data to determine our school wide areas of strength and challenge. Teachers are provided with data analysis training during professional development. They learn structures and protocols that will build their capacity to analyze data and to use data to inform their instruction. Teachers are expected to use these data analysis protocols when they work in their teams. Once the data has been analyzed, we use the results to determine the types of professional development that will be most beneficial. This year, we noticed a small gap between the achievement of our English Language Learners and our other sub-groups. We decided to dedicate some of our professional development time to revisiting the SDAIE strategies that support English Language Learners in accessing the core content. Teachers also have common planning periods with other teachers in their departments. Content teams use this time to revisit the goals of the department and to analyze benchmark assessment data to determine how students are progressing towards the goals that have been set. Department professional development also includes the opportunity for teachers to share best practices.

## **7. School Leadership:**

The Gertz-Ressler leadership team believes in the power of collaboration. As a professional learning community our leadership philosophy is rooted in the idea of distributive leadership. Research supports the fact that school improvement and reform is the responsibility of all stakeholders and that lasting and effective change must come from all levels of the organization. The distributive leadership model allows us the opportunity to tap into and cultivate the leadership capacity of teachers, students and parents. The administrative team consists of the principal, an assistant principal and the director of instruction. While the principal oversees the daily operation of the school site there is shared leadership amongst the administrative team as they work together to ensure that policies and procedures that are in place support student's academic success.

The Teacher Advisory Council is an example of how shared powered is working at Gertz-Ressler High School. The Teacher Advisory Council consists of one teacher representative for every grade level, the principal and the assistant principal. The teacher representatives are selected for the Advisory Council through the electoral process. The Teacher Advisory Council brings issues and concerns of the teachers to the principal where they collaborate to come up with solutions. The Teacher Advisory Council was instrumental in restructuring our mandatory tutoring program. Teachers were concerned that the tone of mandatory tutoring was daunting for potential students who could benefit from tutoring from their teachers. As a result, the policy for tutoring was changed from a program that focused primarily on students who were in danger of failing. "Mandatory Tutoring" was changed to "Gertz-Succeeds" with the focus being that it is open to any student on campus who may need additional support.

Parents play an integral part in student success and it is important that they have the ability to share in the decision-making process. With this in mind we also have the Parent Advisory Council. "Coffee with the Principal" is another way that the administrative team works to build relationships and engage in shared decision making with parents. Parents are invited to have coffee with the principal and share their ideas and concerns one day a month.



The leadership team also employs shared decision making when it comes to allocating resources to improve student achievement. This year we purchased Revolution Prep, a computer-based program that targets math and reading skills that many of our students were lacking. The leadership team worked collaboratively with teachers to determine which program we were going to purchase and how the program would be used to increase student achievement.

# PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 10 Test: California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)

Edition/Publication Year: 2006 Publisher: ETS

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	72	81	55	62	36
Advanced	33	34	15	17	4
Number of students tested	138	129	113	82	194
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	72	81	54	62	35
Advanced	34	33	16	18	4
Number of students tested	137	124	102	74	179
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	86	75	44	77	35
Advanced	57	33	16	23	4
Number of students tested	14	12	16	13	38
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	35	27	16	4	7
Advanced	7	6	2	1	0
Number of students tested	123	115	95	69	156
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	4	0	1	0
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	36	64	35	43	24
Advanced	7	33	6	14	3
Number of students tested	28	115	31	7	34
<b>6.</b>					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>NOTES:</b> We have had significant improvement in percentages of proficient and advanced students in all of sub-groups on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). The jump from 4% to 57% advanced for our African American students is something that we are very proud of. We are working diligently to have all of our students score in the proficient to advanced range. To this end all of our students in the tenth grade have CAHSEE Prep as an elective. Through this class, students have a chance to learn/review all of the standards that are covered on the test during the year before they have to take the exam in March.					

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 10 Test: California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)

Edition/Publication Year: 2006 Publisher: ETS

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	70	64	60	61	56
Advanced	48	27	24	26	24
Number of students tested	138	129	113	82	194
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	69	65	59	61	55
Advanced	47	26	25	26	23
Number of students tested	137	124	102	74	179
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	64	50	56	69	50
Advanced	43	17	25	0	21
Number of students tested	14	12	16	13	38
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	70	66	63	59	57
Advanced	49	28	25	30	25
Number of students tested	123	115	95	69	156
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	100	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	4	0	1	0
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	36	33	39	14	38
Advanced	11	3	6	14	6
Number of students tested	28	21	31	7	34
<b>6.</b>					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>NOTES:</b> Since 2006 we have moved all of our sub-groups to above the 60% level for proficient and advanced on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) with the exception of our English Learner population. We are addressing the needs of our ELs by ensuring that all of our teachers are using SDAIE strategies with their students and by regularly devoting time during PD to address teacher needs and concern in this area.					

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# STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 0

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	72	81	55	62	36
Advanced	33	34	15	17	4
Number of students tested	138	129	113	82	194
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	72	81	54	62	35
Advanced	34	33	16	18	4
Number of students tested	137	124	102	74	179
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	86	75	44	77	35
Advanced	57	33	16	23	4
Number of students tested	14	12	16	13	38
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	35	27	16	4	7
Advanced	7	6	2	1	0
Number of students tested	123	115	95	69	156
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	4	0	1	0
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	36	64	35	43	24
Advanced	7	33	6	14	3
Number of students tested	28	115	31	7	34
<b>6.</b>					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>NOTES:</b> Overall student growth over the last five years has risen steadily. The percent of socio-economically disadvantaged students and African American students scoring Proficient or Advanced has more than doubled in the past five years. Percentages for our Latino students in this area have increased fivefold in the same time period. The percentage of our English Language students scoring in the proficient and advanced range has increased over the past five years as well with a peak of 63% in 2008 and a drop to 36% in 2009. As a result, we have focused a large portion of this year's professional development around giving teachers more strategies to work with their English Lerner populations.					

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# STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 0

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	70	64	60	61	56
Advanced	48	27	24	26	24
Number of students tested	138	129	113	82	194
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	69	65	59	61	55
Advanced	47	26	25	26	23
Number of students tested	137	124	102	74	179
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	64	50	56	69	50
Advanced	43	17	25	0	21
Number of students tested	14	12	16	13	38
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	70	66	63	59	57
Advanced	49	28	25	30	25
Number of students tested	123	115	95	69	156
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	100	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	4	0	1	0
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Proficient and Advanced	36	33	39	14	38
Advanced	11	3	6	14	6
Number of students tested	28	21	31	7	34
<b>6.</b>					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>NOTES:</b> All ELA performance over the past five years has steadily increased in the number of students who score proficient or advanced on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). Not only this, but significant growth can be seen in the number of students who are moving into the Advanced category in recent years. African American students have increased in the percentage of Advanced students each year, and Hispanic students have made large leaps in the percentage of students scoring in the Advanced band as well. The number of English Learners who score Advanced also increased last year, after dropping slightly in 2008 and 2009.					

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